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The Early 1730s Shipworm Disaster in Dutch News Media

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This article investigates the interaction between society, government and news media during the 1730s shipworm disaster in the Netherlands. It focuses on the quality of the information news media provided and the effects the governmental use of news media while addressing the population had in activating them to fight against the shipworm. The article demonstrates that newspapers did not neglect the topic for at least two years following the discovery of the shipworm, nor did they include much information about governmental policies against the disaster. However, more news circulated in pamphlets and news digests, many of which were advertised in the newspapers. The article concludes that the news media reacted soberly to the shipworm disaster.

KEYWORDS Disasters, shipworms, news, media, Dutch Republic

Introduction

The Netherlands have long depended on sea dikes anchored by wooden palisades.¹ During the early autumn storms of 1730, however, even recently installed poles suddenly broke off. This was strange and gravely threatening, since holes in the sea dikes would naturally lead to serious flooding in more extreme weather conditions. In 1730, the damage was first perceived on the Zeelandic isle of Walcheren, during the following year in West Frisia – near the small city of Medemblik –, and subsequently in other North Sea coastal areas and harbours. In the beginning, not much was known about the agent of the damage, which was caused by the *teredo navalis*, a marine bivalve mollusc. The lack of understanding partially explains why it took so long before it became clear how the molluscs could be successfully combatted. In the meantime, various explanations were presented, not only in the affected areas, but also in regions where similar wooden constructions were used for water defence.² The infestation aroused anxious reactions across the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.

So far, the historiography has mainly focused on analysing the course of the 1730s shipworm epidemic, its consequences and potential remedies. Recently, for instance, Adam Sundberg compared the shipworm to both floods and cattle plagues during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ In 2003, José Mouthaan published an article dealing with the contemporary debate about the shipworm epidemic. The sources she used consisted mainly of pamphlets and sermons.⁴ Other scholars, such as A. C. Carter-Le Mesurier and J. A. Bakker, also based their conclusions on the same material and on governmental documents, such as resolutions.⁵

Until now the news media disseminating information about the shipworm infestation has not played a prominent role in research on the epidemic. However, its content and publication policy can teach us more about the ways in which societies dealt with catastrophes in the past. The degree of attention that news media devote to disasters is dependent on the many differences between these catastrophes. Tragedies taking place nearby and having many victims or much damage have always been breaking news in their immediate surroundings almost instantly, at least in political systems without censorship and fear of interfering authorities.⁶ On the other hand, slowly developing disasters usually generate only modest media attention in the beginning, followed by one or more peaks related to specific factors, such as new research or measures to solve the problems. Furthermore, it is evident that news about disasters may help to shape more resilience among the populations involved, but may also bring anxiety and unrest, particularly when sensational, false or ominous information has been presented. We may assume that, basically, this was not very different in previous centuries, although the ways in which people may react to catastrophes have changed considerably.⁷

This article is intended as an early modern case study of the role of news media during catastrophes. How did contemporary Dutch news media report damage caused by the shipworm and how should we assess those reports? How did Dutch authorities use the newspapers to develop suitable measures against the shipworm? First, this article discusses the question of when and in which newspapers, news items about the shipworm appeared. The second section examines news sources that included, in contrast to newspapers, not only news but also comment on the disaster and documents about policies to fight the shipworm. Particular attention will be given to the *Europische Mercurius* [European Mercury], since this news digest – the most prominent of Dutch news digests of the time – contained several extensive appendices regarding the topic.

The shipworm infestation in contemporary Dutch newspapers

The 1730s shipworm disaster can be categorized as a disaster that had an unexpected and curious beginning, since it occurred in a small area and did not immediately escalate across a wide region. One might then expect that such a small-scale event would have few extensive news reports and at most perhaps the oral circulation of eyewitness accounts and occasional small items as more details about the calamity and proposed remedies became known. Does this expectation apply to the eighteenth-century epidemic in question?

In the search for relevant news reports it is important to bear in mind that Dutch newspapers were only published in the province of Holland, not in Zeeland, where the first damaged poles were discovered in 1730. However, the distance between Zeeland and the Holland presses was not far. Travellers between these neighbouring provinces must have spread information about the alarming situation swiftly. Still, during the autumn of 1730, the Holland newspapers of Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden and The Hague did not include any news reports about the Walcheren water defence problems at all.⁸ This strikes one as rather peculiar, even when we take into account that the Holland newspapers – published in this province since 1618 – included chiefly foreign news, while focusing their small share of domestic news mostly on authorized political announcements and shipping information related to the world of trade and commerce. Did Holland news suppliers consider the Zeeland damage unimportant or not yet sufficiently urgent, therefore leaving it to oral dissemination – or were other factors at stake? They probably did not feel comfortable publishing news about the situation, particularly in the beginning when the damaged poles could still be interpreted as the consequence of deferred maintenance. Although the Dutch Republic had a relatively free press, a critical attitude towards the authorities was not yet regarded as permissible.⁹ During the autumn of 1731, Holland newspapers also remained silent about West Frisian shipworm damage. Even the *Amsterdamse Courant*, published close to the afflicted region, did not mention anything. This repeated lack of newspaper reports about damage to the sea dikes strongly suggests self-censorship.

By 1732, the third year of the epidemic, the authorities still did not know how to tackle the problem. This state of affairs can also be considered a politically sensitive situation on which the newspapers were loath to report. It is, therefore, most striking, that the authorities themselves were the first to end the silence about the topic in the newspapers, by appealing to the Dutch population to come forward with solutions. During the summer of 1732, the Drechteland Water Board responsible for the affected West Frisian sea dikes, chose the Amsterdam newspaper's advertorial section as a means to solicit citizen assistance several times. Citizens were invited to come up with suggestions and to test their inventions; they would need to contact the Hoorn or Enkhuizen dikereeve for this.¹⁰ At the same time, the States of Holland announced a call for tenders to deliver timber and other materials to repair the sea dikes.¹¹ This notice may, to some extent, have given the readership a feeling of safety, since, at any rate, it displayed decisiveness concerning procedures to cope with the crisis.

Dutch authorities already had a long tradition of using newspapers as a medium to announce new or revised regulations, such as those concerning fairs and public transport, and also to publish notices describing missing persons or criminals on the run.¹² However, this use of newspapers to ask the public's help with a crucial problem was rather exceptional. It can be seen as an indication of the situation's gravity. This also applies to the 'recommendation' of the States of Holland that Reformed ministers ask and pray God to end the infestation, while simultaneously admonishing their churchgoers to confess remorse. This call was considered news and reported in the newspaper columns – not in the advertisements – by the end of October 1732.¹³ In this case, the States of Holland followed other provinces, among them the Frisian States who had, according

to the newspapers, scheduled a day of prayer because of the shipworm problems on 3 September 1732.¹⁴ The newspaper editors undoubtedly felt the obligation to include these governmental announcements in their columns, thus following established practices of information about days of prayer in case of war and peace, pestilence, severe times and the prosecution of fellow believers.¹⁵

In late 1732 and in 1733, the Rotterdam printer Hendrik van Pelt enhanced the popular idea that the shipworm should be regarded as divine punishment by advertising his publications in the newspapers, with titles such as ‘Een verzameling van de Oordeelen Gods, bestaende in zeewormen’ [A collection of God’s judgments consisting of shipworms] and ‘t’ Treur-kreet des overtreedens tegen den Heere, betoogd in eene weeklage over t’ ontluysterde Nederland, ter geleegentheyd van t’ geduchte Oordeel der zeewormen’ [Mourning cry, concerning the misbehaviour against the Lord, argued in a lamentation about the tarnished Netherlands, on the occasion of the fearsome plague of the shipworms].¹⁶ By including such advertisements and news about days of prayer, newspapers implicitly strengthened the narrative that the shipworm infestation was God’s reaction to sinful behaviour, and also that human solutions would remain insufficient. Although contemporaries were used to such forms of Christian rhetoric, they were repeatedly confronted with terrifying suggestions of the Dutch Republic’s future ruin. This must have intensified opinions about divine fate or destiny and limited human possibilities to control the circumstances.

At the same time, the 1732 and 1733 newspapers included a number of announcements about people experimenting with all kinds of possible means to structurally adapt sea dikes in order to end the shipworm threat. Readers following the advertorial sections could get an impression of the diversity of proposed remedies. For instance, in August 1732, not long after the governmental appeal mentioned above, a certain Paul Antoine Varet declared that he had invented a kind of pitch that would be tested near the city of Medemblik.¹⁷ During the same month, the experienced Jewish Amsterdam surgeon, Abraham German, advertised a rather vague remedy that could be used internally as well as externally.¹⁸ It is unlikely that his recipe was applicable, as German’s name does not return in later sources concerning the shipworms.¹⁹ Anyhow, during the last months of 1732, many Dutch citizens were not yet aware of the fact that wood was not a proper material for sustainably protecting new dikes against salt water. This can be perfectly demonstrated with advertisements published by the Gelderland city of Wageningen, situated in the heart of the Dutch Republic. In December 1732, Wageningen announced the public sale of trees in the s’ *Gravenhaegse Courant*. A number of them were deemed suitable for use ‘as poles along the sea dikes’.²⁰

More apparently useful ideas followed in 1733, such as a plan for new dike constructions made from stone and iron. The advertisement for the booklet in which this idea was elaborated, published in the 16 June Amsterdam newspaper, stated that the publication had been sent to ‘the country’s sovereigns’.²¹ The remark in this advertisement about addressing the authorities must have given hope to the reading audience that the shipworm problem could be solved. The same applies to Pieter Voerman’s advertisements about his alleged invention in the newspapers’ autumn 1733 issues. They state that three poles of the Muiden dike, near

the city of Amsterdam, had been lubricated with different substances in 1732. One of those poles had been unaffected since then, so until the beginning of October 1733 – which the authorities would have confirmed through an official document. It also becomes clear via a few newspaper announcements that he had oiled several ships with the same substance as had been used for the undamaged pole. The relevant dike authorities, however, reacted in the 16 October newspaper that they were not yet convinced of the good effects of Voerman's remedy and that his notification was misleading. In November, Voerman repeated his request to get provisional approval. He did not yet claim that his invention would be effective in the long term. More tests were needed to prove this, but he asked that they be carried out.²² It is obvious that he hoped to earn money with his product, but also that the authorities were careful and wished to avoid potentially false expectations. They used the same news medium as Voerman to contradict him – an intriguing indication of the early importance of newspapers as a communication platform between the state and its citizens in controlling reactions to disasters.

By the end of 1732, other news about the shipworm tragedy also entered the newspapers. Messages from the Southern Netherlands revealed that the molluscs had infected wooden coastal constructions such as lock gates in the Flemish towns of Blankenberge, Ostend and Nieuwpoort. The States of Flanders had started inspections.²³ Dutch news readers could conclude from these reports that the problem was not restricted to the Dutch Republic. Furthermore, it was perhaps comforting to Dutch Protestants that God did not only punish them, but also Roman Catholics. January 1733 issues of the Dutch newspapers included news from Italy that Catholics in the Southern Netherlands had requested that the Pope pray for relief of the shipworm. Reportedly, the Brussels papal nuncio, who did not believe in human means to end the plague, sent a liqueur bottle containing a few shipworms to the Pope.²⁴

The way foreign newspapers treated the shipworm epidemic in the Netherlands would have been more disturbing to its citizens. The 13 January 1733 Amsterdam newspaper stated that the newspapers of the Swiss city of Bern and the German cities of Cologne and Nuremberg had reported that the city of Amsterdam stood on the brink of collapse. According to the Nuremberg newspaper, the richest Amsterdam merchants were already evacuating their houses and bringing their belongings to safety. Moreover, the Dutch authorities were supposed to have urged 12 cities and 200 villages to evacuate their inhabitants. The Bern and Cologne newspapers were said to have even stated that the shipworms gnawed stones and that the Amsterdam city hall was already sinking.²⁵ The Amsterdam editor refuted this news by remarking that it had been made up by persons without the knowledge about the topic who wished to mislead the common people. Amsterdam merchants and entrepreneurs, in particular, must have hoped that foreign news suppliers would pick up this Amsterdam refutation, as negative news about their city could of course harm their business. In February 1733, also the Dutch States General emphasized – in their call for a day of prayer across the whole country – that the disaster was less serious than had been stated in many 'unfounded rumours'.²⁶

The dissemination of news about the Dutch shipworm epidemic abroad can be further illustrated by a comic report published in the 24 April 1733 Leiden newspaper issue, which is rather characteristic of British parliamentary rhetoric. The new British

Member of Parliament representing County Kent had stated that he had to protest a new tax in the House of Commons, as he thought that the Dutch had protested against the devastation of the sea dikes by the shipworms. His comparison would have led to much hilarity according to the report,²⁷ probably also among Dutch readers reading it in the *Leydse Courant*. At that moment the Dutch audience was already better informed. The episode nonetheless makes clear that Dutch problems with the shipworm were a well-known issue within British governmental circles. This is not strange, as the shipworms also threatened coastal areas in Britain.

Other news sources about the shipworm

Although Dutch newspapers did not yet function as a news medium comprehensively covering the Dutch administrative policy concerning the shipworm disaster in the 1730s, their advertisements referred to other sources in which readers could find further relevant information about the epidemic. During the last months of 1732, for instance, the Amsterdam newspaper published Jacob Duyn's advertisements about his publication dedicated to the damage to Northern Holland and West Frisian sea dikes. The booklet included several surveys from the water boards, covering the results of their examinations and other activities to handle the difficult situation, followed by their joint appeal to the States of Holland asking for financial support. The water boards explained that they could no longer bear the high financial burden, resulting from expensive repairs and experiments regarding reconstruction.²⁸

Furthermore, in late December 1732, the Amsterdam bookseller and cartographer Hendrick de Leth was advertising a new map of West Frisia, including the 'Vier Noorder Koggen', the area most affected by the shipworm, in the The Hague newspaper.²⁹ By choosing to advertise in the newspaper published in the political heart of the Dutch Republic, he probably intended to market his product to the circle of regents and civil servants – groups that had to be well informed about the situation. Detailed maps could be helpful for this. In 1733, De Leth and other booksellers also offered publications featuring a few promising dike restructuring proposals.³⁰

The Amsterdam newspaper report about the German and Swiss news, mentioned above, coincided with the publication of a pamphlet on the shipworm written by the Huguenot news reporter Jean Rousset de Missy, and published almost simultaneously in French and Dutch. Advertisements for both versions could be found in the newspaper editions of January 1733.³¹ Rousset opened his text with the remark that he felt duty-bound to react to false rumours. He continued with a few examples of the misleading foreign news and elaborated on them more extensively than the Amsterdam newspaper editor. He also gave rational explanations as to why the foreign reports were nonsense: shipworms could not live in sweet water, so they could not be present in the Amsterdam canals and damage city houses built on timber poles.³² Though foreign audiences clearly were not familiar with this knowledge, Dutch citizens already were, which must have diminished fear of the shipworm further inland.

In short, readers who wanted to know more about the state of affairs could go to the bookstores and buy a variety of publications about the shipworm epidemic, its



FIGURE 1 Frontispiece of the *Europische Mercurius* 43/1 (1732), with in the right corner below a pole damaged by shipworms. The frontispiece's central figure is Mercury. He presents – as the messenger of the gods – news about Mediterranean affairs to Princess Europa who sits on Zeus in the form of a white bull. Copy University of Groningen Library (photograph Dirk Fennema, Haren, Netherlands).

consequences and control. Among these publications were periodicals, the editors of which thought the epidemic a suitable subject to attract readers. Two of these periodicals were the *Nederlandse Maendelykse Postryder* [Netherlands Monthly Postal Rider], which included – according to newspaper advertisements – descriptions of the state of the dikes in the region West Frisia in the north of Holland, and the monthly *Hollandse Spion* [Holland Spy], which published a ‘unique story’ about the origin of the shipworm, late in 1732.³³ Another example is Justus van Effen’s popular magazine *De Hollandsche Spectator* [The Holland Spectator], in which the author implicitly explained the shipworm disaster as divine punishment for the many so-called ‘sodomites’ who had been prosecuted in the Dutch Republic at the time.³⁴ Van Effen assumed that people should exhibit remorse; otherwise human solutions would not help. However, it should also be

noted that he favoured disclosure of information: The conditions of the disaster should not be concealed as a state secret, because the more people knew about the shipworm, the sooner a good solution would emerge.³⁵ In this respect, he expressed an enlightened opinion.

The news digest *Europische Mercurius*, in particular, responded more adequately to the need for information by including appendices with much information and comments. The appendices were published in the 1732 and 1733 half-yearly volumes.³⁶ The first 1732 volume even had a frontispiece in which the shipworm tragedy was depicted as one of the issue's leading news items (Figure 1). Furthermore, a rhymed explanation of this frontispiece announced the volume's first appendix with the lines: 'Moreover, on the other side one sees, /The Worms' plague in our Country: /T'will be treated in this Volume more extensively, /With more, (so that here I can be brief)'.³⁷ Generally, the *Europische Mercurius*' frontispieces did not depict many Dutch topics, which, again, emphasizes the journalistic value of the shipworm and anticipated public interest in 1732. Several other engravings accompanied the text in the appendices, such as a huge fold-out with pictures representing affected oak tree poles (Figure 2).³⁸

The editor's evaluating remarks in the Mercury's appendices are the most interesting parts within the context of this article, as they give us a glimpse of the ongoing public debates and disputes surrounding the shipworm crisis. In the first appendix, the editor toned down the issue, which he felt many people had exaggerated, even the authorities; research would demonstrate that more poles had been affected by age than by the shipworm.³⁹ This opinion must have been soothing to readers concerned by the epidemic. It also suggests that it was possible to criticize the responsible public bodies openly by August 1732.

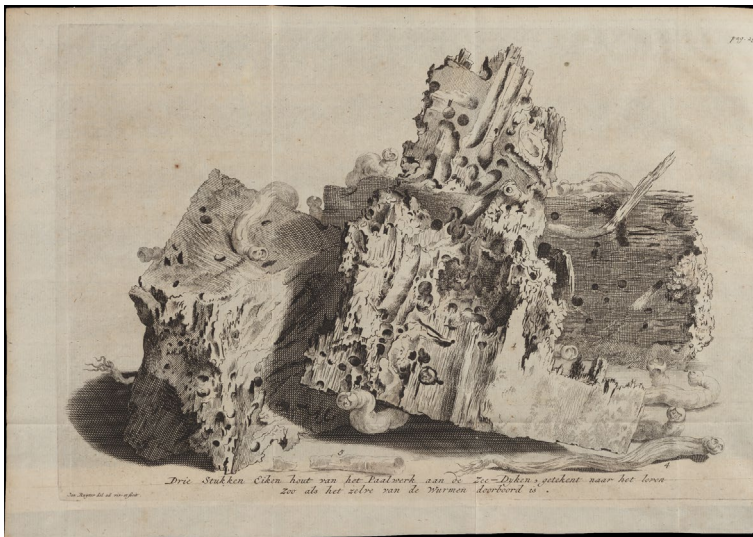


FIGURE 2 Fold-out in *Europische Mercurius* 43/1 (1732), between pp. 296-297, representing oak tree poles affected by shipworm. Copy University of Groningen Library (photograph Dirk Fennema, Haren, Netherlands).

In his first 1732 appendix, the digest's editor did not wish to participate in the discussion about the shipworm's origin, as he argued this would lead to pointless speculation. At that moment, he considered as a sure reason only that God was threatening the Dutch population because of its increasing sinfulness. However, in his second 1732 appendix, the editor revised his views in a comment in an article on the shipworm that had been published in a German newspaper. The shipworm could not be God's punishment for any specific sins as people always sinned, and thus God would always have a reason to punish them. Furthermore, the then topical 'sin' of sodomy could not be the cause of the shipworm as the Dutch authorities had already severely and successfully prosecuted many sodomites the in previous years. In other words, God should rather have exhibited mercy towards the Dutch Republic instead of punishing the country.⁴⁰ Demonstrating this opinion definitely antagonized the ministers who had preached the opposite.

Finally, the appendices also included the text of a dike reconstruction project as proposed by Drechterland Water Board secretary Seger Lakenman, and a shortened version of a treatise about the shipworm itself, written by physician Cornelius Belkmeer.⁴¹ Overall, the *Europische Mercurius* functioned as an instructive news medium, offering adequate detail in combination with the studied comment. Many readers would have appreciated this, as they would not have been able to find such information in contemporary newspapers.

Final remarks

The coverage of the Dutch 1730s shipworm disaster fits into the pattern of limited media attention early on and, subsequently, a few peaks offering more information. The first peak was a rather modest one during the summer of 1732, and the second, a bit more sizeable, but still a relatively unimpressive one, started in late 1732 and continued into the first months of 1733. Contemporary readers could not yet have extracted from the newspapers an ongoing account of the development of the infestation from its start in 1730, neither would they have been able to find opinions about the ways in which the problems could have been solved in those papers. For this, they needed other news media, in particular pamphlets and periodicals. Still, the newspapers functioned as messengers, as they included advertisements for the sale of other printed media on the disaster. This means that such advertisements were not only commercial messages but also had news value.

None of the Dutch news media reported on the shipworm infestation immediately upon its discovery; the first news items appeared only two years later. The news media followed the responsible authorities, who were the first to end the silence in this disaster, by appealing to Dutch citizens for solutions. In doing so, governmental institutions created a more open atmosphere to deal with the crisis, in which very divergent ideas could be expressed via a printed material. Furthermore, Dutch newspapers reacted to false, misleading and harmful news that had been published in foreign news media. This also took place during the second 'peak' of media attention when more had already become known about the shipworm, and at a time when several proposals concerning

new sustainable sea defences were circulating. Although the ultimate effects of those plans were not yet clear, the Dutch audience must already have been calmed down in those months following their initial period of consternation.

The whole time span of the shipworm tragedy has been characterized as ‘a shipworm psychosis’.⁴² So far, historiography has explained this mental state by connecting it with other concerns of the time: supposed economic decline, oligarchic corruption and anxiety as a result of sodomite prosecutions and cattle plagues. These linkages are definitely useful, as they may help to understand specific contemporary reactions. However, this analysis shows that Dutch news media did not exaggerate the shipworm problem. On the contrary, they generally reacted rationally and concisely, and certainly not sensationally. Moreover, they did not report emotional or tense behaviour among the population. This leads to the impression that Dutch society was more resilient as regards the shipworm disaster of the 1730s than has hitherto been suggested.

Notes

¹ For comments and assistance I am grateful to Megan Williams, Jelle Krol and Adriaan Duiveman.

² The shipworm threat still exists. See, e.g. P. Paalvast and G. van der Velde, ‘New threats of an old enemy: The distribution of the shipworm *Teredo navalis* L. (Bivalvia: Teredinidae) related to climate change in the Port of Rotterdam area, the Netherlands’, *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 62 (2011), 1822–29.

³ A. Sundberg, ‘Floods, Worms, and Cattle Plague: Nature-induced Disaster at the Closing of the Dutch Golden Age, 1672–1764’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 2015), notably Chapter 4.

⁴ J. Mouthaan, ‘The Appearance of a Strange Kind of “See-Worm” at the Dutch Coast, 1731–1735’, *Dutch Crossing* 27/1 (2003), 3–22. See also her elaboration ‘*Het Knaegen der Wormen aen de Paelen der Nederlandze Zeedyken: Reacties op de Teredo navalis in de Nederlandse Republiek vanuit Cultuurhistorisch Perspectief, 1731–1735*’ (Zoetermeer: Free Musketeers, 2010).

⁵ A. C. Carter-Le Mesurier, ‘Amsterdam and the “onbekend soort van zee worm” in the 1730’s’, *Jaarboek van het Genootschap Amstelodamum* 70 (1978), 239–49; J. A. Bakker, ‘Paalwormen, dijken, hunnebedden en onze eerste monumentenwet’, in *Van graven in de prehistorie en dingen die voorbijgaan*, ed. by M. van der Velde e. a. (Leiden: Sidestone, 2011), pp. 281–324.

⁶ P. L. M. Vasterman, ‘Media en rampen’, *Psychologie & gezondheid* 36/3 (2008), 105–10. Nowadays, as a result of new and social media, most disasters that occur far away will also be immediately reported worldwide. This leads to changing engagement patterns. See, e.g. M. Kyriakidou, ‘Media witnessing: exploring the audience of distant suffering’, *Media, Culture & Society* 37/2 (2015), 215–31. See also the introduction to this issue written by Raingard Esser and Marijke Meijer Drees.

⁷ See also, e.g. J. W. Koopmans, ‘The 1755 Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami in Dutch News Sources: The Functioning of Early Modern News Dissemination’, in *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections*, ed. by S. F. Davies and P. Fletcher (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 19–40.

⁸ Dutch newspapers can be consulted via the site www.delpher.nl. For the period September–December 1730, this collection contains the complete series of the *Amsterdamse Courant* [Amsterdam Newspaper] (AC), *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* [Sincere Haarlem Newspaper] (OHC) and ‘s *Gravenhaegse Courant* [The Hague Newspaper] (sGrC). The *Leydse Courant* [Leiden Newspaper] (LeyC) series can be consulted via the site of Erfgoed Leiden en omstreken: <http://leiden.courant.nu/>. The *Delfsche Courant* [Delft Newspaper] – in 1733 continued as *Hollandsche Historische Courant* [Holland Historical Newspaper] – was not used for this research because not many copies of the relevant years are available.

⁹ See, e.g. I. Leemans, ‘Censuur als onmacht: De omstreken Nederlandse publieke ruimte 1660–1760’, in *Boeken onder druk: Censuur en pers-onvrijheid in Nederland sinds de boekdrukkunst*, ed. by M. Mathijssen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 45–58.

¹⁰ AC, 26 June, 1, 5, 10, 12, 15 and 19 July 1732.

¹¹ AC, 28 June 1732; OHC, 28 June and 1 July 1732; sGrC, 30 June and 4 July 1732; LeyC, 2 (in Delpher wrongly placed under 4) and 9 July 1732.

¹² The governmental use of newspapers for publishing announcements had started in the 1630s.

¹³ For example: sGrC, 27 October 1732; OHC, 28 October 1732; AC, 28 and 30 October 1732. Also in *Europische Mercurius* (EM) 43/2 (1732), pp. 193–94.

- ¹⁴ AC and OHC, 30 August 1732. The States of Zeeland and Groningen also called for a day of prayer.
- ¹⁵ For example: AC, 28 January 1702, 17 May 1721, 3 March 1729; sGrC, 25 February 1726, 26 January 1731; LeyC, 28 January 1728; OHC, 1 March 1732. About Dutch days of prayer (including the yearly character from 1713): D. Haks, *Vaderland en vrede 1672–1713: Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), pp. 73–76. The 19 November 1732 advertisement in the *Leydse Courant* for a Dutch translation of a Jewish prayer regarding the shipworm tragedy communicated that this religious group had also felt the need to ask for heavenly support. Cf. Mouthaan, 'The Appearance', p. 5.
- ¹⁶ For example: AC, 11 and 16 December 1732, 29 and 31 January 1733, 1 and 3 December 1733; sGrC, 5 and 10 December 1732, 12 and 16 January 1733; LeyC, 23 and 27 November 1733. The Haarlem newspaper was not much used as a medium for advertisements concerning publications on the shipworm.
- ¹⁷ Varet cooperated with Jean de la Croze. sGrC, 11 August 1732. The pitch was still pretested in May 1733. See *Resolutien van de Heeren Staaten van Holland en West-Friesland* (...) 1733 (s. l; s. n., [1733]), 22 May 1733, pp. 632–633.
- ¹⁸ AC, 21 August 1732; LeyC, 22 August 1732.
- ¹⁹ German's reputation, however, seems not to have been bad, as he was allowed to continue his profession in 1733, while many others were forced to end theirs by then. D. E. Cohen, 'De Amsterdamsche Joodsche chirurgijns', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 74 (1930), 2234–56 (pp. 2250–51).
- ²⁰ sGrC, 15 and 22 December 1732.
- ²¹ sGrC, 29 May 1733; AC, 16 June 1733. These advertisements did not mention the author's name, which was Henricus Engelhardt. The advertisement in LeyC, 29 May 1733, mentions him as an engraver. The publication's title: *Goede suffisante Gods verleende, uitgevondende middelen, omme yzere, en steene zeemuuren, met paalen zonder metzelwerk, tegens het schadelijkezeegewormte te maken etc.* (The Hague; Laurens Berkoske, 1733). See also OHC, 3, 7 and 17 December 1733, and Mouthaan, 'Het Knaegen der Wormen', pp. 35–36. The not digitized 1733 OHC copies have been consulted in the Noord-Hollands Archief (Haarlem).
- ²² AC, 6 and 13 October, 10 November 1733; OHC, 29 October 1733. Voerman lived in Amsterdam, at the end of the Wittenburg Isle, an area with many shipyards. The 15 August 1733 Amsterdam issue includes a message about a ship that had been treated with Voerman's 'remedy', which was still without shipworms after 12 months.
- ²³ AC, 9 and 11 December 1732; sGrC, 10 December 1732.
- ²⁴ LeyC, 21 January 1733; AC, 22 January 1733; sGrC, 23 January 1733. This news message reached the Dutch newspapers via Rome. Cf. Mouthaan, 'The Appearance', pp. 14–15.
- ²⁵ Afterwards more extensively reported in EM 43/2 (1732), pp. 307–308, in which the Bern newspaper issues of 6 and December 1732 are quoted (in Dutch translation), and also a supposed German newsletter. The Bern newspaper must have been the newspaper known as the 'Gazette de Berne', with the official name *Nouvelles de divers endroits* (unfortunately no 1732 copies are available). The Nuremberg newspaper is most likely the long established *Teutsche Kriegs-Kurier* – see, e.g. S. Schultheiss-Heinz, *Politik in der europäischen Publizistik. Eine historische Inhaltsanalyse von Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004).
- ²⁶ See e.g. AC, 19 February 1733; sGrC, 20 February 1733; OHC, 21 February 1733.
- ²⁷ Although the report does not mention his full name (only 'Eduard D.'), it was the Tory MP Sir Edward Dering (1705–1762). Also published in EM 44/1 (1733), p. 180.
- ²⁸ AC, 20 and 22 November, 2 and 6 December 1632. The title of the publication: *Beschryvinge, van de schade en raseringe aan de zee-dyken van Noort-Holland en West-Vriesland, door de worm in de palen, en de daar op gevolgde storm etc.* (Hoorn: Jacob Duyn, [1732]). The request also in EM 43/2 (1732), pp. 282–85.
- ²⁹ sGrC, 22 December 1732. Other examples of maps of Northern Holland and Frisia in EM 43/2 (1732), between pp. 288–89 and pp. 306–07.
- ³⁰ It concerns the proposals of Seger Lakenman, and both Pieter Straat and Pieter van der Deure. AC, 20 and 24 January 1733, 2 April 1733, 26 September 1733; sGrC, 30 January 1733; LeyC, 26 January and 5 October 1733. See also Mouthaan, 'The Appearance', pp. 9–10.
- ³¹ sGrC, 5 January 1733; LeyC, 9, 12 and 21 January 1733; AC, 24 January 1733.
- ³² The English translation: *Observations on the sea- or pile-worms which have been lately discover'd to have made great ravages in the pile- or wood-works on the coast of Holland, & c.* (London: J. Roberts, 1733).
- ³³ AC, 4 November and 2 December 1732; LeyC, 5 November 1732 and 3 December 1732. No copies of *De Hollands(ch)e Spion* have been traced so far. Thanks to Rietje van Vliet for consulting her entry about this periodical, to be published in *Encyclopedie Nederlandstalige tijdschriften* (<https://ent1815.wordpress.com/>).
- ³⁴ This issue had escalated during the previous years and had led to many prosecutions. See e.g. D. J. Noordam, *Riskante relaties: Vijf eeuwen homoseksualiteit in Nederland, 1233–1733* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), pp. 212–307.
- ³⁵ *De Hollandsche Spectator*, 21 November 1732. See also I. Leemans and G. J. Johannes, *Worm en donder. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700–1800*:

- de Republiek* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013), pp. 626–27.
- ³⁶ *EM* 43/1 (1732), pp. 296–309; II, pp. 281–313; 44/1 (1733), pp. 285–92; the last finished in 44/2 (1733), pp. 288–300. About this digest, e.g.: J. W. Koopmans, ‘Storehouses of news: The meaning of early modern news periodicals in Western Europe’, in *Not Dead Things: The dissemination of popular print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500–1820*, ed. by: R. Harms, J. Raymond and J. Salman (Leiden and Boston, 2013), pp. 253–273 (pp. 262–264). It is obvious that also this digest’s publisher, J. Ratelband Heirs and Company, considered the news about the shipworms as an excellent selling point, since the appendices were specifically mentioned in the newspapers’ advertisements. See e.g.: *AC*, 12 August 1732; *LeyC*, 20 August and 5 November 1732, 24 December 1732, 19 and 28 August 1733.
- ³⁷ Quote in Dutch: ‘Noch ziet men aan den and’ren kant, /De plaag der Wormen in ons Land: /’t Geen breeder, (opdat ik bekort,) /Met meer, in ’t Werk verhandeld wordt’. J. W. Koopmans, ‘Nieuwsprenten in de *Europische Mercurius* van 1730–1733’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 6/1 (2003), 5–27 (pp. 17–20).
- ³⁸ *EM* 43/1 (1732), between pp. 296–297.
- ³⁹ *EM* 43/1 (1732), p. 298. The *EM* only includes the editors’ initials on its title pages, in these years ‘J. H.’, which most probably correspond with Johannes Haverkamp.
- ⁴⁰ *EM* 43/1 (1732), p. 299; 43/2 (1732), pp. 308–11. The editor refers to the 8 November 1732 issue of the semiweekly Cologne newspaper *Historisches Journal*, published by Friedrich Albert Her(c)kenrath. J. Blunck, *Die Kölner Zeitungen und Zeitschriften vor 1814. Eine Bibliographie mit Standortnachweis* (Münster: Verlag C. J. Fahle, 1966), p. 25. Thanks to Bernd Klesmann for this reference. The mercury’s account also states that an engraving, showing the supposed collapse of the Amsterdam houses, was sold in the German city of Hanover.
- ⁴¹ *EM* 43/2 (1732), pp. 285–304; 44/1 (1733), pp. 285–92 and 44/2 (1733), pp. 288–300. Belkmeer’s complete text was published by J. Ratelband Heirs and Company with the title: *Natuurkundige verhandeling, of waarnemingene betreffende den hout-uytraspende en doorboorende zeeeworm*.
- ⁴² This term is used by H. van der Horst, *Nederland: De vaderlandse geschiedenis van de prehistorie tot nu*. 11th ed. (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2013), p. 239.

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